

Jessica N. Marzi
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Grand Rapids, MI 49503

May 13, 2015

Dear Members of the Michigan Workforce and Talent Development Committee,

As of April 25, I am a proud member of the school counseling program's graduating class of 2015 from Grand Valley State University (GVSU) and licensed school counselor. I am excited to be working in my first job for the Gerald R. Ford Job Corps Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I feel that my program has done an excellent job preparing me to support my work as it relates to college and career readiness.

It has recently come to my attention that you are considering HB 4552, a bill that is intended to address a need for additional training in college and career readiness as reported by practicing school counselors. I am not in support of this bill for several reasons: (1) courses in college counseling and career counseling are redundant with my graduate training, (2) required courses have not been identified in the literature as a best practice that improves student outcomes related to college and career development, (3) requiring additional courses adds a financial burden for new school counselors whose salary is relatively low, (4) requiring courses in college and career readiness seems to elevate the need for college and career readiness above other areas of my training including students' mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, stress, suicide ideation, bullying, harassment, and other social/emotional concerns), and (5) requiring courses in college and career readiness minimizes the need for lifelong learning.

(1) Courses in college counseling and career counseling are redundant with my graduate training. The graduate program at GVSU has included coursework in both college and career readiness. I strongly feel that requiring new school counselors to take these courses or demonstrate proficiency is not a good use of resources. Why require a course of new counselors when they have recently completed training in both of these areas. Furthermore, I was required to demonstrate proficiency in both areas on the recently revised Michigan Test for Teacher Certification Subtest 51. A second proficiency test is also redundant, and I suspect a poor use of resources since it is already assessed for all new school counselors to practice.

(2) Required courses have not been identified in the literature as a best practice that improves student outcomes related to college and career development. As a Master's level practitioner, I have learned the importance of grounding my work in practices that are grounded in the literature. I cannot see where requiring post-Master's coursework has any positive correlation with improving students' college and career readiness. Instead, the research clearly indicates that implementing a school counseling program where school counselors are not burdened with clerical

and other non-counseling roles has positive effects on students applying to two or more colleges. Furthermore, this research documents the relationship between the number of school counselors and increased college-going rates (*School Counselors as Social Capital – The Effects of High School College Counseling on College Application Rates*. 2010. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 89).

(3) Requiring additional courses adds a financial burden for new school counselors whose salary is relatively low. As a recent graduate of a 42-credit program, I have spent more than \$25,000 on my school counselor preparation. The thought of taking two additional courses adds additional burden to me and does not consider the availability to the low cost professional development available to me through District Provided Professional Development or low-cost professional development like Promoting the Publics which is available at a very low cost.

(4) Requiring courses in college and career readiness seems to elevate the need for college and career readiness above other areas of my training including students' mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, stress, suicide ideation, bullying, harassment, and other social/emotional concerns). If this legislation passes, I am concerned that next up will be other special interest groups that will be lobbying for additional training. My understanding is that this is an inappropriate role of legislation. I have learned that professions are given the freedom to govern themselves given that they operate under appropriate ethical guidelines. The ethical code for school counselors and the school counselors competencies are very clear that we need to be prepared to support the college and career development of students. The students I will be working with at the Gerald R. Ford Job Corps Center deserve nothing less.

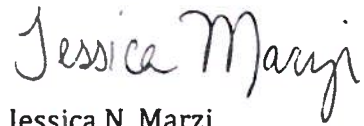
(5) Requiring courses in college and career readiness minimizes the need for lifelong learning. I cannot imagine a scenario in which a school counselor knows everything that there is to know after a graduate program or even after courses that this legislation would require. It is entirely possible that a new school counselor could take a proficiency test and pass or take these two courses and fail to stay current in the field of college and career counseling. That school counselors are reporting the need for training does not surprise me. When can we ever have enough training? I have worked in the area of college readiness for the past two years, and I suspect that I would benefit from continuing professional development.

I am very concerned that this legislation, while well intended, is misguided. I appreciate the attempt to meet the need for college and career readiness, but I feel strongly that mandated training or requiring another assessment to demonstrate proficiency is not the answer. Instead, I think the focus should be on affordable professional development opportunities for all school counselors. This is best evidenced in the Promoting the Publics event that happens every fall with a packed house. If it is offered school counselors will attend, no mandate or proficiency test required. I think the demand for the course offered by the Michigan College Access Network also demonstrates this reality. To spend the funds on a redundant

proficiency test seems like a waste of valuable state resources. To invest in our k-12 students' futures by making affordable, relevant professional development available to school counselors as well as recommitting our efforts to emphasize the value of school counselors by highlighting the impact of fully implemented school counseling programs with lower student to school counselor ratios seems like the solution. To do anything less devalues the credentials that I have worked so hard to obtain these last two years as I begin my new career.

I strongly urge you to vote no against HB 4552.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessica Marzi". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with the first and last names being clearly legible.

Jessica N. Marzi

